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## SALE OF MR. WOODBURN'S PICTURES.

THE late Mr. Woodburn was well known as a collector of paintings, and often employed in that capacity, both by English noblemen and gentlemen, and by the government. His collection of pictures, including works of the Italian, Flemish, Dutch, and German schools, was recently put up for sale by public auction. As might be expected from the position he occupied, many of them are productions of a high order, and the large sums for which they were sold showed the estimation in which they are held by connoisseurs. Of the Italian school, three were described as Raffaeles, several as specimens of Leonardo da Vinci, and one as the work of Buonarroti. Doubts have been expressed as to the authenticity of some of these, particularly that of "Christ bearing a Cross," by Da Vinci, and the "Saint John," by Raffaele. These doubts are founded partly on the anatomical modelling of the figures, and partly on the elaborate foldings of the drapery. That they were pretty generally entertained, is proved by the prices at which these pictures were knocked down. The total proceeds of the sale were £7,500. Among the paintings which sold best were the following:—"The Madonna of the Immaculate Conception," which was painted by Murillo for the Royal Family of Spain, and once belonged to the Infante Don Gabriel, was purchased by Mr. Farrar for 1,000 guineas. It is described in the catalogue as "the finest in England." Mr. Uwins bought "The Adoration of the Virgin," by Giorgione, for 500 guineas, in the name of the government. This picture represents the Virgin sitting with the infant Jesus, St. Joseph

by her side, and a Venetian general in armour kneeling before her, while his horse is held by a page. A convent is seen in the distance. The composition of the picture is strange, but the colouring is very rich and the treatment majestic, especially that of the Holy Mother, whose attitude and features display great spirituality. "The Magdalen," by Titian, fetched 210 guineas. "A Spacious Landscape, with a Village on a River and Figures," painted by Wouvermans, and bearing date 1699, formerly in the Duchess de Berri's gallery realised 405 guineas. "The Virgin Weeping over the Body of Christ," by Guercino, produced 250 guineas; "The Holy Family," by Vaga, 370 guineas; "The Marriage of Saint Catherine," by Poussin, 175 guineas; "The Virgin and Saint Joseph kneeling over the infant Jesus," by Perugino, 153 guineas; "The Tribute Money," a composition of twelve figures, by Rembrandt, engraved by M<sup>r</sup> Ardell, 380 guineas; "The Virgin," by Raffaellini, 145 guineas; "Saint John, in a Landscape, Preaching," by Raffaele, 135 guineas. Other lots were—"Bacchus and Ariadne on the Shore of the Island of Naxos, with Nymphs and Satyrs," by Guido, for 145 guineas; "The Virgin," by Hemling, for 121 guineas; two paintings of rural scenes, by Cuyp, for 115 guineas each; "A Landscape," by Wouvermans, for 181 guineas; "An Italian Landscape," by Wilson, for 150 guineas; "A Classical Landscape," by Claude, for 101 guineas; "A Frozen River, with a Village," by Van der Neer, for 100 guineas; "An Interior," by Terburg, for 93 guineas; and "The Duke of Urbino receiving the Order of the Garter," by Francesca, for 80 guineas. This last was purchased by Colonel Phipps.

## THE WATERFALL, BY RUYSDAEL.

THE works of Jacob Ruysdael—who was born in Harlem in 1636, the same year as Jan Steen, and died in 1681, a few years before his comic contemporary—present a great and astonishing contrast to those we have just had under review. If Steen was well known for his *genre* and conversation pieces, Ruysdael was as famous for his shadowy landscapes, and exquisite, because natural, sea-pieces. This painter, says Sir Edmund Head, is the master whose pictures form the proper type and centre of the whole school of Dutch landscape. In his works, as in those of the great painter of ideal landscape, Claude Lorrain, natural objects are treated in a manner which appears to manifest the influence of a higher spirit; but the means adopted by these two artists were very different. Ruysdael did not need to decorate the ordinary forms of nature, or dress her up in a holiday garb, in order to bring her nearer to something which was divine. Each single object, however homely and familiar, provided it had not been cramped and regulated by the hand of man—the green meadows, the silent sweep of the clouds, the murmuring trees or brook—all breathe the pure and lofty feeling of that higher spirit. His paintings are in fact a renewal of that old worship of the spirit of nature which the Roman historian has ascribed to the ancient Germans. Yet there is in his pictures much that relates to the busy toil of man, but such features in general stand in feeble opposition to the overwhelming mass of natural objects, and the traces of human works often appear as mere ruins which have long yielded to the powerful operation of the elements. Thus it is that the pictures of Ruysdael form the strongest possible contrast to those of Waterloo and other painters.

Ruysdael's subjects are taken from the scenery of the north, although the tame form of nature which he saw in his immediate neighbourhood rarely satisfied him; or when he did adopt it for his model, he generally impressed on it a feeling of mournful solitude. A simple picture in the Berlin Museum is a good example. It represents an old peasant's hut, behind which are lofty oaks; a little stream runs close by at the foot of a wooded hill, bubbling over bushes and stones; lowering shadows from the clouds are cast over the picture; a bright gleam of sun falls on the stem of an old willow, which

stretches itself upwards like a spectre in the foreground; the scenery is secluded and inhospitable; we feel the desolation in which the inhabitants of the cottage must dream away their existence. Other compositions of this kind bring before us the solitude of shady canals, or the depths of a thick wood, enlivened by the passing bustle of a stag-hunt. In some the works of man form the point of interest, but decayed and ruined by the elements. Of this class is the celebrated "Monastery" of the Dresden Gallery—a picture of a deep and peculiar poetic character—but above all his "Churchyard," in the same collection. In this last we see in the background the ruins of a once mighty church, obscured by a passing storm of rain; the whole scene around is wild and desolate, partly covered with bushes and brambles or with aged and decayed trees. This wildness extends even to the churchyard, in which monuments of varied forms give evidence of its former importance. A foaming stream in the foreground finds its way into the waste, even through the tombs, whilst a gleam of sun lights up its eddies and the adjoining graves.

Ruysdael more frequently delineated nature in her grander forms, such as rocky heights surrounded by woods, and torrents rushing between cliffs; sometimes he added a lonely dwelling, which, by its contrast, strengthens rather than softens the horror of the scene, or a shepherd who silently passes on his way over the light bridge. Frequently the scene is perfect solitude, in which the voice of the waters seems to be unbroken by any other sound; on a distant height, perhaps, is a solitary chapel, with the moon behind it, whose beams play upon the foaming waves and dart their single rays of light into the darkness. Pictures such as these are most widely dispersed, and the galleries of Munich, Dresden, Vienna, and the Hague, possess a great number of them. They all display the silent power of Nature, who opposes with her mighty hand the petty activity of man, and with a solemn warning, as it were, repels his encroachments.

In Ruysdael's admirable representations of the sea we find the same grand repose, and the same thorough life and motion of the element. In this line of art also he has executed first-rate works. A large and most excellent sea-piece with a

brisk swell and rain-clouds clearing off, is in the Gallery of the Berlin Museum.

Her Britannic Majesty's private gallery contains one picture by Ruysdael; that of Lord F. Egerton no less than six; and Professor Waagen ascribes to this master another work in the same collection, which usually bears the name of Hobbema. Sir Robert Peel has three fine Ruysdaels: Lord Ashburton's are still more numerous. Besides these, the collections of Sir Abraham Hume, Mr. Wells, and Mr. Hope, must be specially referred to. Waagen speaks with peculiar admiration of a large picture belonging to Mr. Sanderson, and mentions the Ruysdaels at Burleigh and at Luton; more particularly a rare specimen in the latter collection, of the interior of a church, with figures by Philip Wouwerman. The small but exquisite picture called "Les Petits Canards," which Smith, in 1834, valued at 150 guineas, sold in 1844 for 360 guineas, at Harman's sale. It should be added that the Louvre, as well as the Gallery of the Hermitage, contains some very fine Ruysdaels.

The exquisite picture on the next page may be considered a good specimen of Ruysdael's most popular manner. In it rock and water, cloud and verdure, action and repose, are blended together in a manner at once natural and magnificent. The name of Ruysdael is said to signify roaring or foaming water; "and thus," says Descamps, "he seemed predestined by his name to be the painter of Cascades." Houbraken, too, makes no reservation when he praises the transparency and brilliancy of the water in Ruysdael's pictures. "Where is the traveller familiar with the impressive beauties of mountainous countries who cannot find them in the pictures of this great master? At the foot of those steep rocks, how the water falls, foams, and writhes round the ruins it has brought down! It dashes forward from the right, from the left, and from the background of the picture towards the gulf which draws it in; it rushes down, we were about to say, with a hollow noise, for in fact we imagine we can almost hear it. We see it gliding down the slippery rocks, dashing against the rough bark of the trees, and gushing down the rugged bottom of the ravine. We fancy we feel the cold and humid spray falling on our faces. To the left, upon one of the rocks which bound the torrent, is perched a frail cottage, close upon the noisy abyss; and the fragility of this edifice, erected there by the bold hand of some hermit, excites an apprehension as we approach it of some violent assault of the waters that so closely besiege the feeble dwelling. The sky is cloudy, the air oppressed with fog, and great birds are soaring through the loftiest regions of space. The trees are motionless, because the winds have no access to this narrow and confined retreat. The vegetation around it is in admirable vigour. On every rocky point that contains a little earth a tree has taken root. But such is the power of genius, that after having seen in all its magnificent reality the spectacle which the artist has reproduced on a piece of canvas of some few inches in magnitude, nature herself seems to us less grand and less startling than the work of Ruysdael!"

While on the subject of so celebrated a landscape painter, a question of high importance occurs, which had already been raised by the study of Claude Lorraine. Is not the beautiful in art only an imitation of the beautiful in nature? We are of opinion that it is not, and for this reason—but here we must quote the words of a man of taste and genius, an amiable writer, a painter with the pen, who will give our reason better than we could ourselves. "I have here upon my right a fine tree; a vigorous oak, young, leafy, even that of which—

'Le front au Caucase pareil,  
Non content d'arrêter les rayons du soleil,  
Brave l'effort de la tempête.'

"Ruysdael, approach! and with those dark mysterious touches peculiar to thy sombre colouring, with those transparent shadows wherein thou knowest how to plunge the branches, paint us this colossus in all its beauty. Forget not, we pray thee the harmonious fissures of this unstained bark;

nor, higher up towards the north, those few leaves which, chilled and tardy in blowing, shelter beneath the stems of their elders their still fragile stalks and tender verdure. On the other hand, I have here upon my left an oak lopped and thick set, recently mutilated by the wood-cutters; it is nothing more than a knotty and twisted trunk, which from its base to its summit has sprouted forth in unequal twigs: on this side the ants have built their granaries in its gaping flanks, and we can see from its oozing and rotten caverns, black and slimy, the sap exuding from the diseased wood. Approach, in thy turn, Karel Dujardin, and with that charm of simplicity, that unaffected feeling, which breathe in thine artless execution, paint for us this pollard stump amidst all its sickly poverty. Forget not, I pray thee, those distorted swellings, those warts which surmount, like downy hair, the tufts of abortive stems, nor those humid black spots which hang like beads of soot upon the hollow channel of the pith.

"Our two pictures being finished, let the amateur enter, and let us observe him. He is ravished, transported. But this seems absurd, for he has certainly seen, many a time, upon the plain or the hill side, without even noticing them, as beautiful oaks as the one, and still more mutilated pollards than the other. How comes it to pass, then, that, on being thus reproduced upon canvas, these two trees yield him so much pleasure? How is it that already they seem not to be trees he is contemplating, but objects which give him pleasure, which affect him, which speak to him; words and language in which he reads some charming thought, expressed with grace and poetry that transport him? It is already clear that this oak, the production of Ruysdael, says things which our oak, the production of the acorn, does not say, and that if fine oaks do spring from the earth, it is nevertheless, in reality, this fine production of Ruysdael's art, and not this fine produce of the earth, which ravishes and transports the amateur."

Amateurs, who above all look at the painting, that is, the execution of a picture, remark in Ruysdael nothing of his touch (for it is blended and but slightly visible, in comparison especially with the *impasto* style of Hobbema) but those warm and bituminous grounds which give so much vigour to his tones, and serve as a basis to their harmony; then the cleverness with which he could render this preparation cold again by a general tint of a bluish and pearly-gray, which is more in accordance with the cast of his reveries; they admire the perfection of his foliage, which, instead of being rounded and *à peu près*, like that of many painters, is rendered with a precision and a tremulous touch imitating the cut-out leaf of parsley; but what they admire above all, are the transparency, the lightness, and depth of his skies. In Ruysdael's clouds are found at once the most beautiful forms of nature and its finest colours and movements. Sometimes they are seen floating rapidly through space, and casting their fleeting shadows over the country; sometimes they are sailing through the firmament with a majestic slowness. The illusion is always complete; the eye follows them, and expects at every instant to see them disappear. In the representation of clouds, Ruysdael has never been surpassed, or even equalled, unless by Gillaume van de Velde and Karel Dujardin; he excels especially in the art of representing those bursts of light when the sun suddenly disperses the rainy clouds and banishes them to the extremity of the horizon. This glimpse of the sky between two storms, this pale and fugitive smile of nature, have been cheering to the artist; they have at least soothed for an instant the morbid melancholy of his heart, and he has therefore rendered them with all the power of his genius. Nothing can be more wonderful in this way than the "Coup de Soleil," at the Louvre, known amongst artists as the "Thicket of Ruysdael." To attempt a description would be useless: how is it possible to describe a picture which is simply composed of a large dark thicket and a sandy road gilded by a sunbeam?

Grandeur is a quality of the mind. Thus we see how Ruysdael, in his landscapes of two or three feet square, has

succeeded in producing the illusion of profound solitude and infinite space. To produce such great effects, he employed very few means. Trees, water, and sky,—these are all his machinery: men and animals seldom intervene, or they are

monuments of man. Passion, then, was the genius of Ruysdael. What renders his pictures inestimable is, that he has, so to speak, enclosed under their glaze his most intimate and secret sentiments; and on seeing so rare a mixture of



THE WATERFALL. BY JACOB RUYSDAEL.

not done by his own hand. He did not even avail himself of the mournful but commonplace influence of ruined buildings. He only painted the trunks of trees torn up by the tempest, or pieces of rocks carried away by torrents, that is to say, the ruins of nature; for nature has her ruins like the

ineffable poetry and strict precision, it may be said that he painted his landscapes in the obscure chamber of his soul.

Like a true poet, this great painter lived poor, and died young on the 16th of November, 1681.